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ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN PLEASURE GARDENS

Ellen Churchill Semple

Noonday in early May on the Isthmus of Corinth. Beneath a ledge of gray limestone a ribbon of mauve shadow stretches across the narrow beach to a sapphire sea. A stiff breeze from the Hellespont tips the Aegean waves with curling crests, sucks up the moisture from the lucid air, and sends the limestone dust swirling down the white road. The sun burns face and hands as if its rays came through a lens, while the alkaline dust makes the eyes and skin smart. I creep for refuge into the purple shade beneath the ledge, blessing this "shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land," to eat my Homeric lunch of bread and wine, goat's cheese and figs.

CLIMATE goes far towards explaining those lovely pleasure gardens widely distributed in the ancient Mediterranean lands and still persisting in many places with their traditional features of confining wall or hedge, their seclusion and shade, their flower beds and ornamental fruit trees, their fountains and central pool, their sunken paths and marble seats and colonnades, their statuary and shrubbery, and the vine-grown pergola for the outdoor repast.

The Mediterranean climate encouraged the maintenance of pleasure parks and gardens, because the mild temperatures kept a succession of trees and plants in blossom all year round, brought winter blooms to the rose and almond tree even in northern Italy, and renewed the freshness of the evergreen foliage during the winter rains; hence it rewarded the labor of the cultivator and preserved the beauty of the garden in the cold season. But gardens were the boon of summer. The long, hot, cloudless months made the shelter of vine-grown arbor and cypress avenue a welcome refuge. When the thirsty etesian winds swept down from the north or the sirocco from Africa, only the garden kept moist and green and fresh. Eyes tired by a relentless sun and its reflection from the limestone roads rested gratefully upon the dark foliage of laurel or oleander. When the stifling afternoon passed and the people issued from their darkened houses, the garden paths invited to leisurely strolls. In the Paradise legend Adam and Eve heard "the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day," after the custom of Palestine and other Mediterranean lands. Likewise Ammon Ra "walked abroad" in his temple garden at Thebes, where Queen Hatshepsut had planted myrrh trees imported from distant Punt.

But other factors, social and economic, contributed to the development of these ancient gardens: early concentration of population

in cities, expansion of trade and the accumulation of wealth, stimulation of civilization by commerce, growth of a cultured leisure class, with its concern for the amenities and luxuries of life. A more potent factor still was the rapid advance of agriculture till it attained the aesthetic stage, crowning evidence of its intensive character.

The cultivation of land for the mere embellishment of life is a frequent concomitant of intensive tillage, even when scant arable area makes such use of the soil seem extravagant. It is conspicuous in warm countries, where an open-air life is possible, but appears also in less exuberant form in colder countries that have a long growing season like England. As a native growth it meets us in modern Japan, the Hawaiian Islands, and other islands of the South Seas, in ancient Persia and Babylonia, in Kashmir and northern India under the Mongol rulers, and at the other side of the world in ancient Mexico. All these countries developed intensive agriculture, and all had to rely wholly or in part upon irrigation to secure an adequate food supply.

Ornamental gardening became a feature of ancient Mediterranean civilization. It began at the eastern end of the basin at an early period and advanced westward in the wake of trade and colonization. Everywhere it took root and became the fine efflorescence of that patient, tireless tillage of the region. It grew out of the widespread fruit, flower, and herb culture, which in greater or less degree depended upon summer irrigation. The pleasure gardens originated in walled orchards and vineyards, in plantations of flowering pomegranates, quinces, plums, and apricots, in groves of stately date palms, all with their irrigation pools and canals. The spaces between the rows of trees, for the more economic use of the precious soil, were often planted with flowers at once useful and beautiful, like the saffron-yielding crocus or the edible poppy, or "the henna flowers in the vineyards of Engedi," or the violets, iris, and roses of Boeotia, Cyrenaica, and other lands for the manufacture of perfumes and unguents.

The bloom and fragrance of the grape, pomegranate, and the nut tree were prized by the ancient Jews, as were the fruits. "I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded." Orchards and vineyards provided certain essential elements of the pleasure garden—blossoms, fragrance, and especially shade. Hence the ancient Mediterranean gardens, in their long development, employed vine-grown trellises, fruit trees, alleys of shade trees, and masses of shrubbery, and relied for artistic effects only in part upon flower beds. Even then they preferred the flowering shrubs, like myrtle, laurel, and oleander, masses of green picked out with pink or white. The aesthetic value of the ripe fruit was never discounted.

In point of size the ancient gardens varied from the ample palace grounds and parks of kings—which, however, reached only moderate

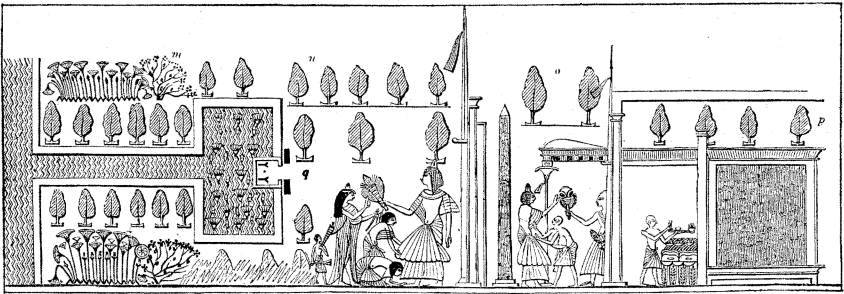


FIG. 1—Theban villa with garden. (After Wilkinson: *The Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, 1847, Vol. 2, Fig. 116, p. 129.)

proportions as a rule—to the private garden, whose size depended on its location and on the means of the owner. In the size of gardens one seems to detect everywhere a certain restraint probably due to the high cost of land and of irrigation. Water theft from the public aqueducts was a common offense among Athenians and even the wealthy landed gentry of the Roman suburbs. The typical private garden was small, even diminutive. It lay near the house and formed an outdoor extension of it; here much of the family life was led. The master could step from drawing-room or dining room to flower-bordered terrace or shaded path. Resting on a marble bench or walking beneath a colonnade, he commanded a view of the whole. Its small size encouraged complete cultivation and ample use of water and did not necessarily lessen its beauty. A little garden dedicated to Eros is made to speak for itself in an anonymous Greek poem: "I am not great among gardens, but I am full of charm."

This small scale was yet further reduced in the exquisite miniature gardens planted in the peristyles of Greek and Roman houses in the century before the Christian era or perhaps earlier. The peristyle garden still survives in the Spanish patio with its arcade, central fountain, myrtles, pomegranates, jasmines, and palms growing in earthen jars. In the eastern Mediterranean it survives also in the spacious court of the typical Damascene residence, whose tessellated floor is broken in the center by water basin and fountain, surrounded by flowering plants. Orange, lemon, and pomegranate trees afford rest to the eyes. The fragrance of jasmine fills the air and penetrates to the recessed colonnade or *liwan*, where couches look out upon the enclosure.

In contrast to the small private gardens were the sacred groves and temple grounds. These also, like the peasant's orchard, felt the transforming touch of the gardener and became beautiful parks. The Temple of Jerusalem was an exception, because the Jews feared that trees in the courtyard might savor of the hilltop groves of Baal.

The summer drought dictated the introduction of water as an

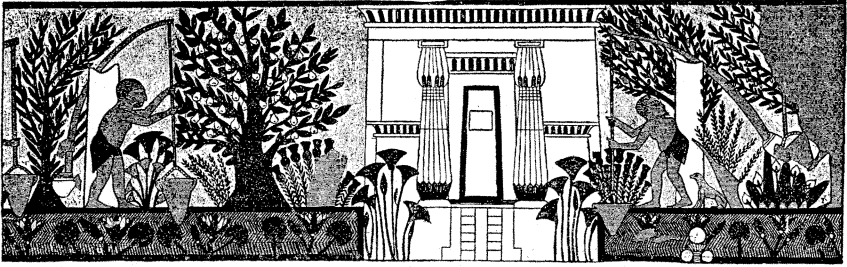


FIG. 2—The garden of Apoui, Thebes. (After *Mémoires publiées par les membres de la Mission archéologique française au Caire*, Vol. 5, 1894.)

unfailing feature of the garden. It was handled as an artistic motif in countless ways. It was conducted about in stone, cement, or tiled runlets; it emerged from some decorative opening in a terrace wall or issued in jets from a statue; it was collected in fishpond or lotus pool; it flowed from artificial grotto or leaped from a rocky ledge into a marble basin. Moreover, the irrigation canals with their secondary furrows necessitated a regular system, which tended to throw the garden plan into geometric forms. The modern oriental garden always seems dominated by the irrigation scheme on which its life depends. In the exquisite Indian gardens seen about Jaipur and Amritsar the water conduits dictate the basic lines of flower beds, tree plots, and pools, just as they do in the garden plans depicted on ancient Egyptian tombs.

The same thing is true of the Persian rose gardens which in Shiraz today reproduce the ancient garden pattern. An old description of a sixth-century Persian rug shows the design of a pleasure garden, planted in fruit trees and flowers, crossed by straight paths and irrigation conduits, while the border represents long flower beds. Persian garden rugs of 1600 and later show the traditional design—a central water basin with fish and ducks, canals leading thence in formal arrangement, narrow paths along the canals, cypress alleys or slender flower beds in the border, trees and shrubs growing in vases, while the weave in the streams resembles "watered ribbon."¹ The whole arrangement is rectilinear, reproducing the Persian garden plan as necessitated by irrigated horticulture in a semiarid land.

Like their Persian prototypes, the Mediterranean gardens were for the most part formal and architectural in style. They were not an idealized landscape like the English park, or a miniature landscape like the Japanese garden. They had no place for winding paths or pools with the sinuous outlines of natural shores. Back of the garden we see the engineer with his problems of hydraulic pressure, his

¹ See Marie Luise Gothein: *Geschichte der Gartenkunst*, Vol. 1, Jena, 1914, Fig. 102, p. 150. Volume 1 of this admirable work deals with the development of gardens from ancient Egypt to the Renaissance in Italy, Spain, and Portugal and is richly illustrated. An English edition of the work is now available, New York, 1929.

traditions of durable and economical construction, even when pursuing aims of beauty, and his architectural skill in utilizing the small space at his command.

So much for the general conclusions. A survey of the ancient Mediterranean gardens according to countries will demonstrate the truth of these conclusions and show the types that developed in various regions, owing to local differences of geographic, economic, and social conditions.



FIG. 3—A Persian garden. (From an early sixteenth-century miniature in the Cochran Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.)

Paradise, that garden which “the Lord God planted eastward in Eden,” was modeled upon the gardens found in all irrigated lands from Persia to Palestine; and it became a prototype of the flowery retreats of Mediterranean civilization from Damascus, Jerusalem, and Antioch in the East to Spain and Granada in the West. The river that watered Paradise was divided into several channels, after the manner of “the shorn and parcelled Oxus,” the Nile, and other irrigation streams. The garden contained “every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food.” The tree of knowledge and the tree of life were rare exotics introduced by the early dram-

atist who staged here the first great tragedy of man.

The desert Arabs, who skirted the high rim of the Mediterranean Basin from Moab to Hermon and looked down on the irrigated gardens of Damascus and Ramoth-Gilead, pictured their paradise as a pleasure garden abounding in fountains of pure water. There in the noonday heat the saints reclined on silken couches spread in deep shade and enjoyed the fruits always ripe on the trees. It was the Garden of Resort in the Koran, the Garden of Eden, the Garden of the Most High with everything to satisfy the taste and delight the eye. “Close down upon them shall be its shadows and lowered over them its fruits to cull.” Though the Arab paradise waited for the pen of Mohammed, it belonged of old to the Semites of desert and grass-land; it doubtless lived in Arab poetry, ages before the seer of Mecca.

GARDENS IN PALESTINE AND SYRIA

The oriental models found apt imitators in Palestine, Philistia, Phoenicia, and northern Syria, where geographic conditions encouraged their introduction and further development and where the rich and powerful maintained large estates; but the Judean peasant enjoyed his leisure beneath his own vine and fig tree or raised a few flowers in his herb garden. King Solomon had his pleasure park near Jerusalem, whither he was wont to go in the morning, Josephus tells us. It was laid out in fine gardens and abounded in rivulets. The author of the Song of Solomon described an ideal garden to which he compared his beloved. A high wall ensured its privacy, and it was watered by a never-failing spring. Almond trees raised their crowns of pale pink blossoms. The scarlet fruit of the pomegranate trees punctured the dark foliage with points of light. There were beds of narcissus, crocus, henna, and all the other aromatic plants that could be made to grow, while the blossoming grapevines gave forth their perfume. "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out."



FIG. 4—A Persian garden. (From an early sixteenth-century miniature in the Cochran Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.)

The Bible in figurative language indicates the beauty of these gardens, specifies their trees and flowers, and suggests their wide prevalence. The Garden of Eden is the synonym for earthly beauty and productivity. Jehovah, placated after one of the habitual backslidings of His people, promises to convert the desert into a tree garden: "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree [acacia], and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together."

In the Book of Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom compares her glory to the beauties of a garden—to the cedar of Lebanon, to the cypress of Mt. Hermon, to the palm and the olive and the plane, to the wide-spreading terebinth tree, to the blossoming grapevine, and the roses of Jericho.

From her issue pleasant odors like the fragrance of spices and sweet-scented shrubs. She invites all to come and eat of her fruits. Then the figure of speech shifts to another feature of the garden: "I also came out as a stream from a river, and as a conduit into a garden. I said, I will water my garden, and will water abundantly my garden bed; and, lo, my stream became a river, and my river became a sea." So full flow the wellsprings of wisdom.

In the city of Jerusalem the royal rose garden alone was allowed, because no dung might be brought within the walls; outside, practical considerations probably dominated, though the introduction from Greece of laurel, iris, ivy, mint, narcissus, box, and rue indicates an aesthetic motive. Under Greek and Roman rule, when peace brought plenty, the environs of Jerusalem blossomed with gardens, orchards, and olive groves. A wide stretch of these north of the Wall of Agrippa was destroyed by Titus in 71 A. D. during the siege of the city. On this side opened the Gate of Gennat or Garden Gate. East of Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives, lay the Garden of Gethsemane, much frequented by the citizens. When the April sun ripened the fields of barley and the first blast of the sirocco heralded the Feast of the Passover, thither the men of Jerusalem, escaping from the city's heat, would resort for nightly promenade. One such group of friends, one such night, made this little pleasure park a synonym of agony. Another such garden near the hill of Golgotha received the body of the dead Christ. The ancient Jews used these green enclosures as family burying grounds, in which a natural or artificial cave served for the sepulcher.

Semitic garden technique was early perfected in Syria, because this land, more than Palestine, was constantly subjected to Persian influences, both through trade and conquest. There the imperial rulers established royal parks, where the cedars of Lebanon grew larger and finer than on their native mountains. The palace of the Persian governor of Northern Syria, at the source of the little Dardes River between Aleppo and the Euphrates, had a "beautiful garden containing all that the seasons produce," but it was destroyed by Cyrus the Younger in 401 B. C.

Throughout Syria and Palestine the groves on hilltops, consecrated by the native Semitic population to the worship of Baal and the generative forces of nature, seem to have been improved by cultivation. These groves were sometimes found growing about high-laid springs, which later were distributed into water conduits, or they were planted as acts of devotion near a spring or well. The sacred trees were the oak, tamarisk, poplar, palm, and terebinth, all which were improved or maintained by irrigation. As the groves were gradually provided with altars and finally with temples they became converted into gardens.

The native Canaanites and Phoenicians dedicated these gardens with obscene rites, but the Israelites also frequented them and thereby provoked the denunciations of the prophets. Such probably was the sacred grove and temple of Astarte, located at the springs of the Adonis River (Nahr Ibrahim) below the crest of the Lebanon Mountains. Here the people of Byblus and neighboring Phoenician cities



FIG. 5—The Garden of Gethsemane. (Photograph by James Ricalton, courtesy of *American Forests and Forest Life*.)

celebrated every spring the death and resurrection of the nature god Adonis, youthful lover of Astarte (Aphrodite). Here the red anemone, dyed in the blood of the slain god, bloomed amid the cedars and walnut trees, and here the mourning worshippers sacrificed the miniature “gardens of Adonis,” which figured in his rites as practiced in western Asia, Alexandria, and Greece. They were small baskets or earthen pots planted with wheat, barley, fennel, lettuce, and various flowers; epitomes of field and garden, sprouting and withering in eight days, they typified the ephemeral life of spring vegetation. Adonis worship prevailed also in contaminated Jerusalem, where Ezekiel saw the women wailing for the god in the temple gate. Isaiah describes the short-lived gardens which were placed before the images of Adonis, exactly as one sees them today in the Catholic churches of Italy on Good Friday, the vernal memorial of the dead Christ.

The Phoenicians were commercial nurserymen in Homeric times. Their cargoes included plants and trees, useful and ornamental, which were disseminated over the whole Mediterranean from their native habitats in the East and early became commodities of general international trade. This process stimulated horticulture, spread informa-

tion as to methods of cultivation, or led to large-scale experiments in acclimatization. It is possible to follow the introduction of the peach from Persia into Egypt, thence into Rhodes where the tree long sulked and refused to bear, and finally into Greece and Rome.

EGYPTIAN GARDENS

Phoenicia and Palestine, through centuries of commercial and political affiliation with Egypt, drew suggestions for their horticulture

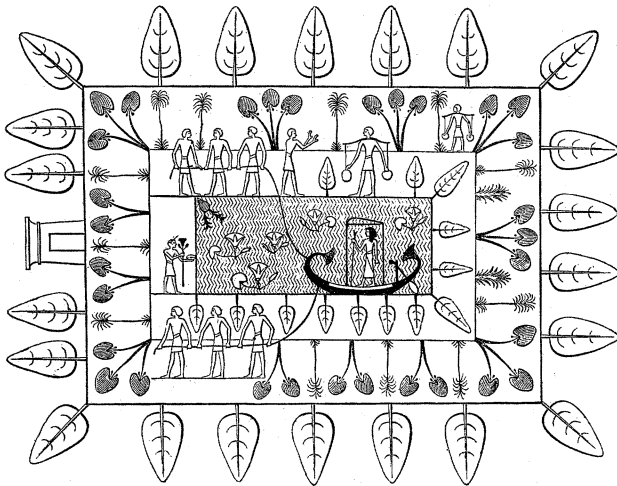


FIG. 6—Painting on a tomb at Thebes. (After Wilkinson: *A Popular Account of the Ancient Egyptians*, 1871, Vol. I, Fig. 27, p. 25.)

also from the Nile Valley. There all conditions encouraged the early development of pleasure gardens—careful agriculture, a long, hot summer and the need of escape from it, demand for flowers in the worship of nature gods like Isis and Osiris, and finally the presence of a rich and refined leisure class. The Egyptian pleasure garden never lost the marks of its origin in orchard and vineyard and of its conformity to the requirements of irrigation.

Formal gardens existed in Egypt in the Fourth Dynasty (2800 B. C.). In the Eighteenth Dynasty garden technique was fully developed and beautified the country and city houses of the wealthy. Local plant resources no longer sufficed; incense trees and other exotics were imported. A garden of this period, depicted at Thebes, shows a walled enclosure laid out in eight sections. The middle section is occupied by a long grape arbor shading a path to the dwelling. Near by are two water basins with pavilions on their margins, lotus flowers floating on their surface, and ducks swimming about. Two other rectangular tanks, bordered by avenues of alternate palms and fig

trees, occupy the front part of the garden. An artistic balance marks the composition of the whole.

A picture in a high priest's tomb at Tel-el-Amarna shows a complex of buildings, comprising his residence and the storehouses of the temple,

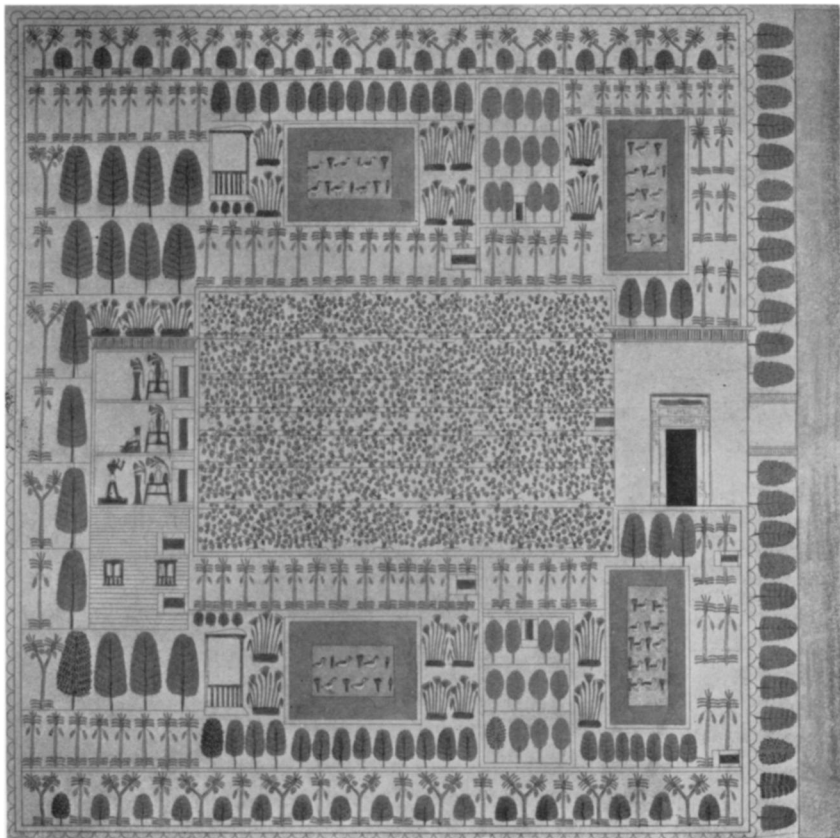


FIG. 7—Painting in a tomb representing the garden of the commander in chief of Amenophis III, Thebes. (After Ippolito Rosellini: *I Monumenti dell' Egitto e della Nubia, Monumenti civili*, Vol. 2, Pisa, 1834.)

all surrounded by a garden. Trees set in depressions to hold water fill the spaces between the buildings. A palm garden has a square tank or pool in the center, around which other trees are planted in formal lines. A flight of steps leads down to the water, while a kiosk overlooks the pool. This is a recurrent feature in Egyptian gardens. A villa garden depicted on another Theban tomb has the usual combination of canal, water basin, shady avenues, and flower beds but in addition shows an awning stretched over the entrance of the dwelling and projecting into the garden to form an outdoor room.

Flowers were used profusely in the social and religious life of the

ancient Egyptians. At banquets they decked both table and guests. The guests wore lotus buds in their hair and held out the open blossoms to one another to smell. Garlands festooned the wine jars. Bouquets were offered to the gods; wreaths encircled the necks of sacrificial geese and bulls and covered the mummy cases on their way to the tomb. Finally, according to a love song of the Turin papyrus, a garden is the trysting place of two lovers; and there beneath a wild fig tree they meet "on the festival of the garden." One is reminded inevitably of Japan with its national flower festivals and its passion for gardens.

GREEK GARDENS

In contrast to the explicit testimony on aesthetic gardens left by Egyptian tombs and papyri, evidence of development of private gardens in Greece is fragmentary and meager till Hellenic culture has passed its zenith: then the references become abundant. The pseudo-Platonic dialogue "Minos" alludes to authoritative books on gardening which have vanished. But there is ample evidence of a highly developed garden technique, which beautified the temple groves with flower beds and fountains and converted prosaic orchards into recreation parks.

The Greeks, like the Hebrews, show a love of gardens in their mythology. As companion piece to the Garden of Eden, they give us the Garden of Hesperides, located in a fabled island of the far west. Pindar describes its beauty:

There round the Islands of the Blest,
The Ocean breezes blow,
And golden flowers are glowing,
Some on trees of splendor growing
And some the water feedeth.
Fair wreaths they yield, wherewith
The happy ones do twine their hands.

The garden of Alcinous, though planted for practical purposes, reveals a sense of horticultural beauty. "Without the courtyard hard by the door is a large garden covering four acres; around it runs a hedge on either side. Here grow tall thrifty trees—pears, pomegranates, apples with shining fruit, sweet figs, and thrifty olives. On them fruit never fails; it is not gone in winter or in summer but lasts throughout the year. And here trim garden beds, along the outer line, spring up in every kind, and all the year are gay. Near by two fountains rise, one scattering its streams throughout the garden, one bounding by another course beneath the courtyard gate toward the high house."

From such farm gardens developed the Greek pleasure garden. Flowers were raised on all country estates to provide "decorations for altars and statues and wreaths of beauty and fragrance for the person." They were the chief crop in industrial gardens, which sup-

plied the maker of perfumes and unguents. Those in Cyrenaica were famous because the semiarid climate made the roses, violets, and crocuses more fragrant than elsewhere. Such commercial nurseries doubtless stimulated aesthetic horticulture, which was also aided by Alexander's conquest of western Asia; for the victors returned with new fruits like the citron, with new plants, and with countless Semitic



FIG. 8—Mural painting in the palace of Knossos representing boy gathering crocuses or saffron for a religious ceremony or feast. About 1800 B. C. The original is in the museum at Candia. A reproduction in color appears in Sir Arthur Evans's "The Palace of Minos," Vol. 1, 1921. (This reproduction is from Plate 26 of Rostovtzeff: *A History of the Ancient World*, Vol. 1: *The Orient and Greece*, 1926, by permission from the Oxford University Press.)

slaves trained in garden technique; finally they were filled with enthusiasm for the numerous Persian paradises they had seen.

But Greek gardens had appeared in Athens before this. Aristophanes mentions "fragrant gardens" injured by insects; vine-grown gardens where the birds picked the berries of the myrtle, poppy, and sesame; and sweet violets growing by a fountain in a garden. Such allusions are short and casual, but they indicate quiet green retreats like that Lesbian Garden of the Nymphs described by Sappho (600 B. C.):

Through orchard plots with fragrance crowned
The clear cool fountain murmuring flows,
And forest trees with rustling sound
Invite to soft repose.

We hear more of private gardens which were thrown open to the public and therefore figured in the common life. Cimon of Athens, general during the Persian War, pulled down the walls of his garden and grounds in order that his fellow citizens might share the fruit. Plato, Epicurus, and Theophrastus bought land and planted gardens

to be used for schools of philosophy, and they came to rank among the glories of Athens.

The architecture of the Greek dwelling, with its open peristyle court, suggested the interior garden as a natural accessory; yet in Homeric times and long afterward this court served as an outdoor workshop. Where or when it first came to be planted and beautified is unknown; for this evanescent art of flower and shrub would leave few traces. Yet the remains at Herculaneum and Pompeii reveal the perfect development of the peristyle garden in Greco-Roman houses of the first and second centuries before the Christian era. Vitruvius describes the Greek drawing-room in the Cyzicene style of house as facing north upon gardens in the rear and having windows like folding doors, so that the garden view might be unobstructed. To this and later periods belonged the perfected house garden of the widespread Greek cities. These were small and exquisite, rigidly symmetrical, and adorned with colonnades and statuary. Shade trees and fountains cooled the air; beds were planted each with a separate kind of flower, lily or rose, violet or crocus, lest the large should rob the small of its nourishment. Gardens by the sea had lagoons and navigable channels, in which grew marine plants, encircled by native trees and shrubbery.

It was in their public parks, however, that the democratic Greeks developed their national talent for landscape gardening. These grew out of the sacred groves, transformed by every means of enhancing natural beauty known to the Greeks, and devoted to popular recreation and exercise. The Academy of Athens, outgrowth of Athene's sacred olive grove in the Cephissus Valley, was repeatedly beautified by tyrants and statesmen of the city. Hipparchus surrounded it with walls in the late sixth century before Christ, and Cimon embellished it with walks, trees, and fountains. Here were alleys of elm and plane, "sunless at noon," nightingales singing in the deep coverts, groves of laurel and olive, narcissus and crocus blooming abundantly beside the irrigation rivulets. Thus Sophocles knew it, as later did Plato and his followers. Gymnasia and palestrae were places not only of training but also of recreation; and their plantations of trees, shaded walks, and fountains attracted young and old. The ground plans of gymnasia excavated at Delphi, Priene, Epidaurus, and Pergamum indicate that landscape gardens occupied the peristyle enclosures. Even prosaic Sparta located its wrestling ground in the Plane-Tree Grove on an island in the Eurotas River.

The sacred groves of forest trees, which antedated temples, were gradually improved by cultivation, diversified by ornamental trees and plants, and adorned with marble altars and fountains; for springs were invariably present, whose nymphs were honored. Fruit trees contributed their beauty and yielded revenue. Strabo says that "flowery groves" surrounded the temples to Artemis, Aphrodite, and the nymphs

in the Alpheus Valley about Olympia. Here Xenophon built a temple to Artemis in an orchard. Pindar speaks of the "pleasant garden" surrounding Aphrodite's temple in Cyrene, where the Greek colonists maintained consecrated groves. Finest of all was the Garden of Daphne, sacred to Apollo, near the city of Antioch. It was famous for its laurel and cypress trees, its fountains and streams, and its shining temple of Apollo, whose sumptuous festival was held every August.

A motive for the introduction of flower gardens into the sacred groves lay in the demand for a particular flower in the cult of each deity. Aphrodite was the "violet-crowned" protector of blooming gardens. Sacred to her also were the rose and the bridal myrtle with its fragrant white blossoms. The laurel tree with its clustered bloom, essential in the worship of Apollo, was always planted near his temples. Laurel and myrtle were not native to the Crimean shores of the Euxine; the Greek colonists there tried by every known art to grow them for religious purposes, but in vain. They succeeded in raising figs and pomegranates, whose foliage and fruit graced many a Mediterranean garden, but had to cover the trees in winter.

Greek settlers on distant Mediterranean shores were constantly reclaiming some new spot to beauty. Colonists on the Asia Minor and Syrian coast were doubtless stimulated thereto by contact with the Persians. Tissaphernes, Persian satrap of Lydia during the Peloponnesian War, had a park, "a place charmingly wooded and watered, with delightful walks and summerhouses." Antioch was laid out by Seleucus Nicator on a magnificent scale with boulevards planted in flower gardens, which were bordered by colonnades and ornamented with marble pavilions, baths, and fountains. From the west gate of the city an avenue led through a suburb of garden-set villas, vineyards, rose gardens, and groves to the Park of Daphne. The Ptolemies laid out a succession of fine public gardens in Alexandria about the museum and gymnasium; the latter had porticos six hundred feet long enclosing a shady court.

The social conditions of Hellenic Syria and Egypt, which assured wealth to the ruling class, recurred among the colonial Greeks of Sicily and there too resulted in a display of gardens. Gelon, tyrant of Syracuse (476 B. C.), had a royal park of great beauty. It was well irrigated and contained a wonderful "Horn of Amaltheia," a plot of blossoming fruit trees and flower beds, accounted a masterpiece of the gardener's art. Hiero II of Syracuse achieved the fantastic in horticultural art. On the upper deck of a monster pleasure ship he laid out a roof garden, which was provided with walks, pergolas, and arbors covered with ivy and grapevines; shrubs and flowers were planted in casks of earth to complete the effect.

The use of flowers runs through all Greek life. Every dwelling

seems to be in touch with some garden. The people have the tender feeling for flowers that characterizes one who has cultivated his own garden. In all their public celebrations and in their common daily life the Greeks made an extraordinary demand for flowers, which expert florists supplied all the year round. There was a regular succession of blooms, from the white violet of mild days in winter and the early plum to the autumn flowers which, when planted in sunny and protected spots, prolonged their season far into the winter.

"Violet-wreathed Athens" had daily flower markets where many

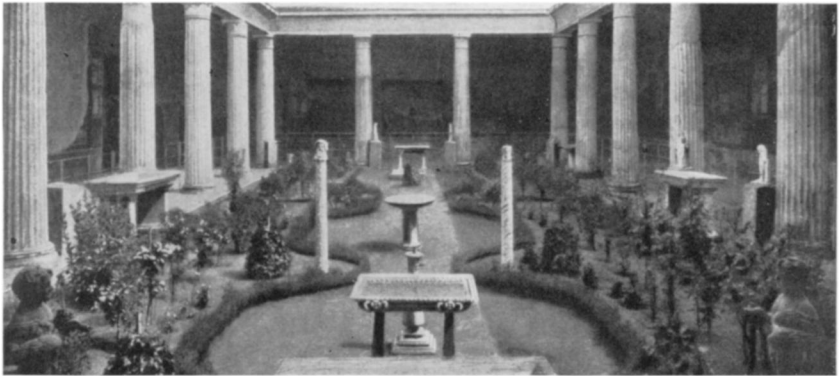


FIG. 9.—Restoration of the peristyle garden in the House of the Vettii, Pompeii.

varieties of roses and violets were sold, besides phlox, hyacinths, narcissus, iris, lychnis, myrtle, lilies, anemones, crocuses, and numerous sweet-smelling shrubs. Flower girls went from house to house, offering their wares for sale or filling a regular order as if they were delivering milk and eggs. Flowers were cultivated in market gardens in the suburbs. Roses received special attention. The bushes were transplanted frequently and were cut back to prevent deterioration of the bloom; or they were burnt back—a treatment known to some modern European florists.

The Greeks constantly varied the native supply of garland flowers by foreign importations and domestication of wild species. They knew which countries produced the finest and most fragrant varieties, but they experienced difficulty in growing these in an alien climate and soil. Domestication presented similar problems. A species of wild thyme was transplanted from the mountains and cultivated at Athens and Sicyon; but as wood plants were often sterile under domestication, considerable art was required to propagate them. A remarkable hundred-leaved rose was grown at Philippi in eastern Macedonia. It had been domesticated from a many-leaved variety which grew wild on the slopes of Mt. Pangaeus near by. As this coast had been the scene of early Phoenician settlement from the neighboring

island of Thasos, one surmises that this rose of the Macedonian hills was perhaps an exile from some far Sidonian garden. Or it may have been derived from the garden attributed to Midas by Herodotus, "in which wild roses grow, each one having sixty petals, and surpassing all others in fragrance."

ROMAN GARDENS

The practical Romans, for centuries a race of farmers, reveal the slow evolution of aesthetic horticulture from the merely economic;

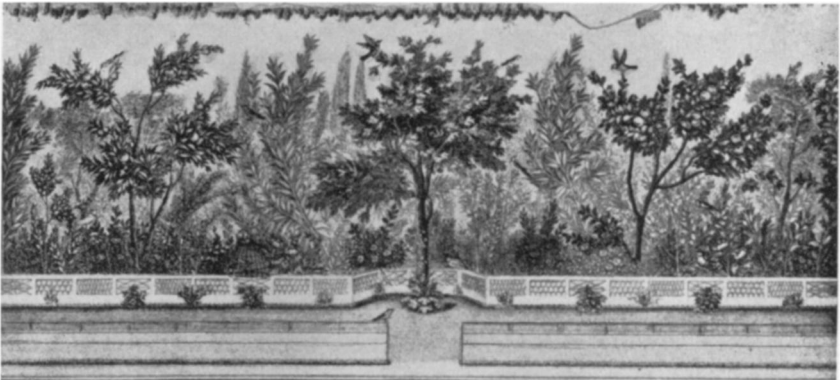


FIG. 10—Restoration of a garden fresco in the House of Livia before the Porta Prima of Rome. (*Antike Denkmäler*, Vol. 1, Berlin, 1891, Pl. 24.)

eventually they gave it the final touch of beauty and magnificence. In ancient Latium, as in Greece, the garden was part of every farm. Primarily for fruits and vegetables, it included also flowers for the garlands used in ceremonies. An ancient scene reported by Roman tradition is that of Tarquinius Superbus (534 B. C.) in his garden showing a perturbed official how to handle a threatened revolt, by silently striking off the heads of the tallest poppies as he sauntered down a path. Cato the Elder (d. 149 B. C.) states that every farm garden should contain flower beds and ornamental trees, like the nuptial myrtle, the Delphic and Cyprian laurel, and that it should be laid out near the house.

Two centuries later Columella, in his "*Carmen Hortorum*," describes the garden of a large estate, emphasizing the flowers, which he calls "those earthly stars . . . the violet beds unfold their winking eyes . . . the rose abashed with modest blush unveils her virgin cheek," "the horned poppies with their wholesome fruit and poppies which fast bind eluding sleep," "plants of a thousand colors." This is a farm garden. Its flowers, along with vegetables and fruits, are packed into white osier baskets and sold in the nearest market town. The flower trade pays, for "the vendor, with staggering

pace and soaked with wine, joyfully from town returns, weighed down with cash."

The demand for flowers increased with increasing luxury in the late republic and the empire. In early times public benefactors were honored by simple chaplets of leaves; later, crowns of blossoms became customary. From Rome's early days garlands decorated the temples of the gods, the domestic Lares, and the sepulchers; but later in private life their use increased. At banquets roses were scattered on the

tables and crowned the guests. "Let not roses fail the feast, nor lasting parsley, nor the lily soon to die."

Horace states that in his time flower gardens had become a great national indulgence, displacing field crops. The territorial expansion of imperial Rome caused an economic



FIG. 11.—The Mausoleum of Augustus turned into a garden. (After Lanciani: *The Ruins and Excavations of Ancient Rome*, 1897, Fig. 182, p. 463; courtesy of Houghton Mifflin Company.)

reaction upon production in Italy, a reaction that was strong and immediate, owing to easy maritime communication between Rome and remote parts of her empire. The importation of provincial grain into Italy discouraged agriculture and interrupted the normal evolution of tillage. But a partial readjustment followed when Roman farmers concentrated on intensive garden and fruit culture and thus specialized in products that were proof against foreign competition. The change stimulated the finer aspects of horticulture, while increasing population and wealth multiplied the demand for the rarer products, whether flower, fruit, or vegetable. Thus an improved floriculture constantly enlarged the element of beauty in the Roman kitchen garden.

Furthermore, increasing contact with Greeks and Asiatics, who already had a highly developed horticulture, and the growing wealth of the patrician and equestrian orders at Rome combined to make the pleasure garden the fashion in Italy. Riches and slaves poured into the country from the eastern provinces. A force of expert workmen was at hand just when a cultured capitalistic class at Rome was looking for new and refined enjoyments and when the wear and tear of city life and the excitement of political campaigns drove the wealthy to provide rural retreats for themselves. They began to convert old

farms into country estates with shady groves, formal garden, and summer dining room in marble pavilion. Or they built smaller suburban villas, each with its pleasure garden, like that of Diomedes near Pompeii and of the Younger Pliny at Laurentum. The millionaires laid out their gardens in the city and there, within enclosing walls,

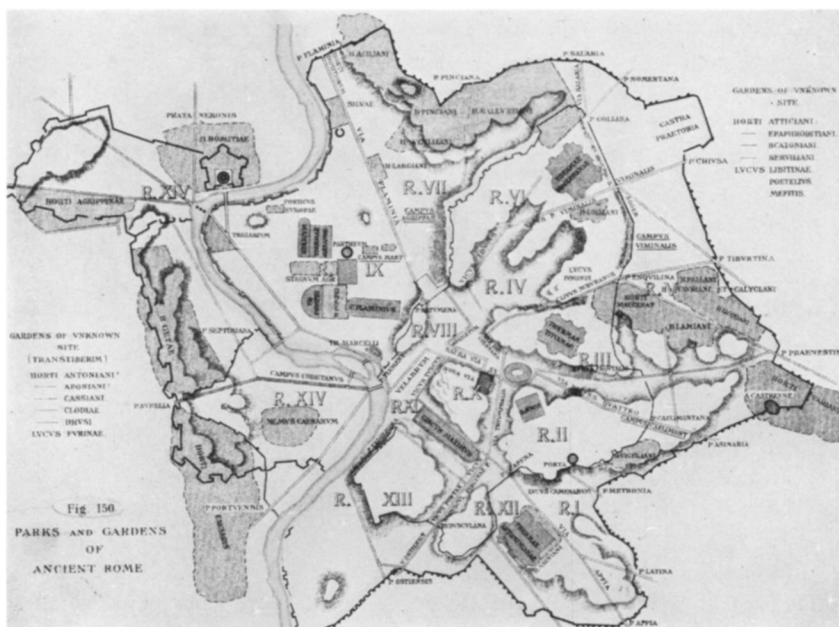


FIG. 12—The parks and gardens of ancient Rome. (Reproduced from Lanciani: *The Ruins and Excavations of Ancient Rome*, 1897, Fig. 150, p. 394; courtesy of Houghton Mifflin Company.)

made their green retreats. The building of villas became a passion among the Romans. Cicero, in addition to his ancestral estate at Arpinum, bought seventeen others which he improved and occupied from time to time. Lucretius, writing in 61 B. C., pictures the restless high-class society of his day vibrating between town and country house.

Private pleasure gardens therefore abounded within and without the capital. A map of imperial Rome shows them extending over the hills for two miles or more on both sides of the Tiber, almost encircling the city with a wreath of green. The significant fact of their distribution is their paucity within the old city of the Seven Hills enclosed by the Servian walls and their great number and expanse immediately outside them. The inner city, even in imperial times, contained only the garden of Lollia and part of the garden of Maecenas.

The outer girdle of green comprised the Pincian Hill, the ancient *collis hortorum*, where lay the gardens of the Acilian family and Pompey, the sumptuous gardens of Lucullus which later became the

haunt of Messalina, and the beautiful grounds of the historian Sallust, which in the Italian Renaissance became the site of the famous Villa Ludovisi. The green belt curved east and south through a long series of gardens, most famous of which were the *Horti Maecenatis*. These were laid out above an old potter's field and dumping ground of the Esquiline Hill, which Maecenas covered with twenty feet of earth and converted from a plague spot into a place of beauty. The low plain west of the Tiber and the slopes of the Janiculum and Vatican Hills were covered with imperial gardens. Lanciani estimates that the capital under the Caesars had one-eighth of its area laid out in gardens and therefore was provided with lungs as are few modern cities.

We have scant data as to the size of the gardens. Those of the emperors and nobles were undoubtedly large, like that of Maecenas, which measured about 1000 by 300 feet, some seven acres. However, this area included the palace and various other buildings which constituted a rich establishment; so that the planted spaces were probably small. The ruins of the imperial palace on the Palatine Hill contain traces of a formal garden two acres in extent, measuring 525 by 156 feet. These gardens were large, considering their location within the city; but one represented wealth, and the other imperial power.

The famous porticoes and gardens of the Campus Martius presented a total length of over three miles of covered walk and sheltered an area of about six acres; but they enclosed garden spaces amounting to sixteen acres. The *Porticus Liviae*, which Augustus laid out as a public garden on the Esquiline Hill, has left remains sufficient to indicate its size and character. It was a sunken parterre two acres in extent (377 by 246 feet), approached by a flight of steps from above and surrounded by a double colonnade which overlooked the central garden space. This isolated *Porticus* was probably typical of those in the Campus Martius and suggests a taste for small and finished garden plots even as public parks.

Outside the city the gardens were large wherever wealth abounded. Magnificent villas with beautiful grounds were distributed along the main highroads within easy chariot ride of the capital. They occupied all the choice sites in the Alban Mountains, an old volcanic region of fertile soil, deep woods, lakes and springs, fifteen miles southeast of Rome. High up on the northern slope, above modern Frascati, Cicero had his Tusculum villa with gardens laid out in terraces and shady groves, one of which he called the Academy and another the Lyceum. Near by Lucullus had one of his sumptuous estates, with formal walks, open pavilions, and outlook towers.

The Sabine Mountains on the western flank of the Apennines had many villas about Tibur (Tivoli), notably those of Maecenas, Augustus, and Hadrian. The seashore also had its country estates, not only Ostia and Laurentum, which were within easy reach of Rome, but

also remoter points like Antium and the beautiful region about the Bay of Naples. When the Italian Renaissance revived the ancient type of gardens, many estates like the Villa d'Este at Tivoli, the Villa Aldobrandini at Frascati, and the Villa Barberini at Rome occupied the sites of the once famous gardens of Hadrian, Lucullus, and Nero.



FIG. 13—Woman in a garden: mosaic in the Baths of Pompeianus. (After Charles Tissot: *Géographie comparée de la Province Romaine d'Afrique*, Paris, 1884, Vol. 1, Pl. 3.)

Moreover, they utilized ancient statues and vases which came to light when the soil was dug up for the new plantations.

The detailed description left by the Younger Pliny of his suburban villa at Laurentum and his country estate in Tuscany reveal the leading features of ancient Roman pleasure gardens. Like the Egyptian and Greek gardens, these were formal in design and were connected with the dwelling, so that life indoors and out was not divorced. The typical villa had a long portico opening upon a terrace. This was the *xystus* of the garden and served as an open-air drawing-room. Its level surface was covered with turf, broken here and there by beds of violets, crocuses, lilies, or other low flowers, each kind by itself in a separate plot. Its outer edge was bordered by box or other shrubs, trimmed often in fantastic shapes as in Pliny's Tuscan garden, or by a low marble balustrade recessed at intervals to hold a tall marble vase or fountain basin, as depicted in the wall paintings in the Palace of Livia at Prima Porta and the garden frescoes of Pompeii.

The *xystus* overlooked a lower garden, or *ambulatio*, with which it was connected by broad steps or a grassy ramp. Seen from above, the *ambulatio* presented the appearance of a varied mass of foliage grateful to the eye. But the shining green of the pomegranate trees

was pricked by the nasturtium red of its fruit. The pure yellow of the citron and the pale buff of the quince stood out against the dense green behind; for these fruits served the same decorative purpose as the lemon and orange later in the Renaissance gardens of Italy and

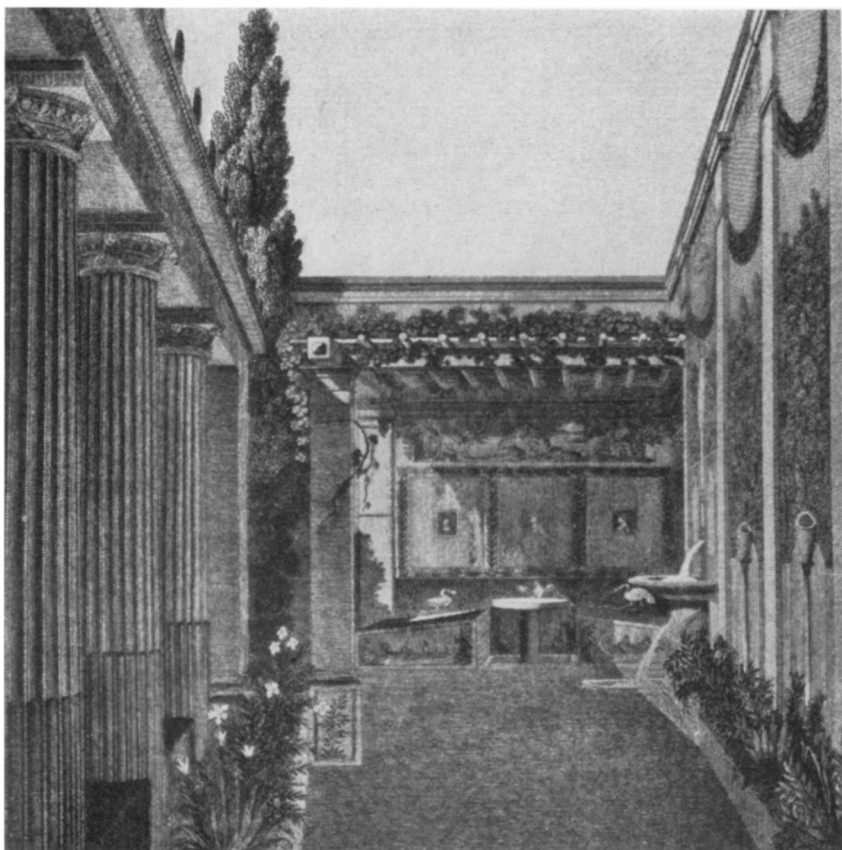


FIG. 14—Garden of the House of Sallust, Pompeii. (After François Mazois: *Les ruines de Pompéi*, Paris, 1824, Pt. 2, Pl. 38.)

the Moorish gardens of Spain. They contrasted with the solid masses of the flowering laurel and the pink or white oleander bushes, and their rounded tops of green with the slender spires of the cypresses.

This *ambulatio*, or second part of the typical Roman garden, was planned for leisurely strolls after a meal when mild exercise was joined to conversation. It consisted, therefore, of shaded walks and alleys for use when the sun was hot and of open paths for twilight hours. The spaces between the walks were planted with fruit or shade trees; but where a vista opened to sea or mountains the eye ranged across low beds of hyacinths, asters, jasmine, and roses.

The third section of the Roman garden was the *gestatio*, the shaded avenue where the master took his airing on horseback or in a litter carried by slaves. It either encircled the *ambulatio* or was laid out quite apart, usually in oval form. In either case it was bordered by a fancifully cut box hedge or by dwarf plane trees; for the Romans had discovered the art of dwarfing trees by peculiar methods of plant-



FIG. 15—Patio of the Linderaja, the Alhambra.

ing and topping them. The topiary art of clipping trees and shrubs was introduced into Rome from Syria about the beginning of the Christian era.

Gardens were not the monopoly of the rich and noble in ancient Italy. The remains of Pompeii show them attached to the average town residence scaled down to the size of a town lot. The old Italic *atrium* house of Pompeii had a small garden in the rear, enclosed by extended side walls of the dwelling and a cross wall at the back. It was therefore as wide as the house but usually quite shallow. The House of Sallust, built in this old style in the second century before Christ, had such a garden, 60 feet long and only 20 feet wide. Though small, it had all the elements of the traditional garden.

Pompeii lay in a region of ancient Greek colonies and had a considerable Greek element in its population, as indicated by numerous family names. Hence the Greco-Roman peristyle type was established here in the second century before Christ and prevailed in the handsomer dwellings. The peristyle court was adorned with flower beds.

vases of growing plants, fountains, water basins, and statues. All were arranged with studied symmetry, as the traveler sees them today in the great peristyle (33 by 65 feet) of the House of the Vettii, which has been restored and replanted according to the original plan.

Behind the peristyle and its apartments usually lay the garden or *viridarium*. The portico façade thrust out wings at either end and enclosed the garden on three sides by colonnades. A Pompeian wall painting depicts this type of semi-inclosed garden, evidently borrowed from Greece as it resembles the Cyzicene house garden described by Vitruvius.

As population increased in Rome and the private houses of the old city were superseded by tall apartment houses (*insulae*), the little gardens were crowded out; but in their stead window boxes of growing plants were introduced "to pasture the eyes on," Pliny says. Roof gardens crowned the city buildings with shrubs, grape arbors, fruit and shade trees, all planted in boxes of earth, while high above the street marble-rimmed fish pools reflected the blue sky or the silent stars.

The Roman type of garden may have been transplanted to Carthage on the conquest of Africa in 146 B. C.; or the conquerors may have occupied unaltered the fine villas that surrounded the Punic capital with their gardens and orchards from early times. In 310 B. C., when Agathocles of Sicily marched on Carthage, he passed through a cultivated and irrigated region, Diodorus tells us, occupied by the landed estates of the Carthaginian nobles, "which they improved for their delight and pleasure." Centuries later villa parks of surpassing beauty still persisted. Aesthetic gardening was a natural development for a people who inherited the principles of Phoenician horticulture, who produced an authority on tillage like Mago, and who, like the Romans, had a rich and privileged class.

GARDENS IN SPAIN

Ancient Spain has left no record of pleasure gardens, though, under the favorable conditions of climate and relief, they may have readily developed from the intensive tillage of the native Tartessians and the colonial Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans who settled on those shores. Strabo (b. 63 B. C.), sailing up the Guadalquivir, described with enthusiasm the beauty of the "orchards and gardens which in this region are met with in highest perfection"; but he failed to specify pleasure gardens. Here at Gades (Cadiz) was born Columella of Roman blood, who more than any other writer on ancient horticulture sang the praises of flowers, as he had seen them grow in his father's gardens beside the Guadalquivir.

With the Saracen conquest in 711 A. D. Spain begins to glow with the beauty of its gardens. The Arab conquerors, conservators of

ancient Mediterranean civilization in an age of barbarian invasions, had already mastered the art of gardening in their eastern homes; they embodied the ideal of their craft in the Moslem dream of paradise. But the environment of Spain produced the perfect efflorescence of this art, because it gave to the craftsman incentive, opportunity, abundant material, and abundant reward. The gardens of Spain became a revelation of the Saracen spirit finer even than the dream of paradise. Here race and environment seem to have combined to produce perfection; but it must not be forgotten that the previous habitat of this conquering race lay among the orchards of apricot and almond, among vineyards and balsam groves, and beside pools and rivulets of Yemen and Mecca. Who tilled those narrow terraces, who watered those slender garden plots earned beauty as well as life.

Many of the old gardens of Granada have survived Christian depredations. The fact that impresses one here is the succession of small gardens incorporated in the architectural mass of the Alhambra and the Generalife—the group of jewel spaces, each in a setting of stone walls or stucco arcade, each exquisite and distinct in itself. Such is the little Patio of Lindaraja with its alabaster fountain, its thicket of roses and myrtle and citron and orange, tempering the noonday glare to a mysterious gloom. Such is the *Jardin los Adarves* with its vine-covered trellises and its blossoming trees looking toward the snowy Sierra Nevada. The Generalife too reveals the charm of small and perfect gardens. Here they glow with sunlit flowers; there they are subdued to deep shade in a sunken water garden, whose green pool is overhung by lines of aged cypresses. This composite grouping recalls the complex garden enclosures of Egyptian Thebes, of Rome, Tibur, Tusculum, and the Naples country; and it makes one realize that the Egyptian Pharaohs, the Roman Caesars, and the Moorish Sultans all planned their gardens after one common model.

The arcade about the Generalife "Garden of the Pond" bears the inscription: "Charming place! thy garden is adorned with flowers which rest on their stalks and exhale sweetest perfumes; fresh breezes stir the orange tree and spread abroad the fragrance of its blossoms. I hear voluptuous music mingled with the rustling of leaves in thy grove. Everything about is harmonious, green, flowering."

"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out." East meets West, the garden of Palestine and the garden of Granada.